DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 775 HE 029 608

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TITLE Marginal Worth: Teaching and the Academic Labor Market.
REPORT NO ISBN-1-56000-263-8
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 170p.
AVAILABLE FROM Transaction Publishers, Rutgers--The State University, New Brunswick, NJ 08903 ($29.95).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Books (010)

EDRS PRICE Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; *College Instruction; *Compensation (Remuneration); Faculty Evaluation; *Faculty Workload; Higher Education; Labor Market; Merit Pay; Motivation; *Productivity; Public Opinion; Salary Wage Differentials; Teacher Role; Teacher Salaries; *Teacher Supply and Demand

ABSTRACT

The contemporary academic labor market is examined using concepts from labor market economics and sociology to elucidate why teaching, universally acknowledged to be at the center of American academic life, is not at the center of the academic labor market and is only modestly rewarded. First, tenets of the neoclassical labor market model are applied to the academic labor market. Then the centrality of teaching to most academics is then discussed; it is concluded that the academic profession is indisputably a teaching profession. Discussion then turns to why teaching is not more substantially weighted in distribution of rewards. Contributions of teaching and teachers are then compared to those of researchers. A chapter is devoted to concerns expressed by faculty, in which classroom instructional matters are not prominent. The definition of merit in academia is examined, focusing on relative value placed on teaching, research, administration, and service and on content of letters of recommendation written by faculty peers. The workings of the academic labor market are described, and the contribution of academic administrators to diminishing faculty resources and morale is noted. Finally, arguments for the current academic reward system are reviewed, and potential for its improvement using motivation theory is discussed. (Individual chapters contain reference notes.) (MSE)

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